

title, however, the book is not grounded in the history of small towns, their change over time, or their economic and social struggle to survive. Nor is it intended to be. Geographically focused on the region around the author's home near Philadelphia and in other coastal regions both east and west, the book is useful to understanding midwestern Main Streets only in a general and somewhat esoteric way. Readers may pick up this book because of its title and tinted picture postcard dust-jacket, but those wanting more grounding in real Main Streets and real small towns will set it down again.

Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth-Century America, by Carolyn M. Goldstein. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. xi, 412 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 hard-cover.

Reviewer Gwen Kay is associate professor of history at the State University of New York at Oswego. She is the author of *Dying to be Beautiful: The Fight for Safe Cosmetics* (2005) and "'If it did not exist, it would have to be invented': Home Economics in Transition at Iowa's Regents Institutions" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2011).

In *Creating Consumers*, Carolyn M. Goldstein argues that home economics, and the professionals who practiced it, had a profound impact on American culture. By creating a professional niche for women, particularly in government and business, home economists fostered a culture of smart consumption, economical and healthful meal planning, and sanitary home environments. Arranged chronologically, and parallel within time periods, the book details the careers of women in this burgeoning field. By focusing on two key arenas in which home economics was visible in the twentieth century, she illustrates women's agency within the agencies of their employment.

This history of a discipline and its practitioners examines organizations and the individuals in them. The focus on the federal government minimizes state variation or extension work. The businesses, with varied locations and headquarters, are not particularly focused in the Midwest, although a food purveyor in Minneapolis and a utility in Chicago are among the many surveyed. The scope of research is impressive, and there are enough connections to Iowa State University to warrant future research into its faculty and graduates, particularly because education is not the focus of this book.

Home economics, organized into a discipline in 1908, fostered Progressive Era ideals of efficiency and sanitation. Arriving on the scene as the nexus of production was shifting from home to factory, home economists gave much attention to consumption. Just as these

early home economists were embedding themselves in academia, World War I broke out, and they were pressed into government service. What began within the Food Administration morphed into the Bureau of Home Economics (BHE) within the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1923. BHE employees, mostly female, were charged with providing information to the public, especially targeting rural populations. The work encompassed textiles, nutrition, home equipment (appliances), and behavior (social surveys). During the agricultural depression of the 1920s, for example, textile specialists worked with the cotton industry to find ways to improve sales and products.

Simultaneously, businesses began to hire home economists. Companies employing home economists included food producers, appliance and houseware manufacturers, magazines, and utility companies. In all instances, the role of these women was not sales but rather creating a relationship with the consumer, explaining how to use the new cheese products, helping manufacturers determine the best size and shape for bakeware, or arguing for the health benefits of clean light. These home economists positioned themselves as trained, professional women who could mediate between the needs of women consumers and the product of their employer; this connection, fostering a desire for consumption, was a key part of their job. The role of these women was precarious: was it to educate consumers or pitch a product? As such, some in the profession questioned whether this was a legitimate activity for home economists.

After describing this early period of establishing legitimacy and utility in the interwar years, Goldstein shifts to the war and postwar period. In contrast to their roles during World War I, home economists were important but less visibly so, more seamlessly integrated (as both paid staff and volunteers) in the government's efforts of home conservation, recycling, and re-using as part of the larger war effort. Home economists in business were charged primarily with keeping the company's name visible as product was often unavailable; cooking demonstrations, radio, and other means of communication with customers were still valued, not least in anticipation of pent-up demand.

Postwar prosperity produced many changes within government and business for home economists. In the former, the BHE underwent several name changes and reorganizations, ultimately focusing on nutrition at the precise moment that a consumer movement was calling for all the things home economists championed. New governmental agencies and watchdog groups were populated by people other than home economists. In industry, the new field of market research marginalized the special insight and connection with consumers the home

economists offered, increasingly relegating them to creating recipes and dress patterns rather than mediating on behalf of the consumer.

Other, larger cultural changes altered the public face of home economics in the 1960s and 1970s, including the feminist movement and debates about name and image within the home economics community. Home economists may be less visible today, but we have absorbed many of their lessons about consumption, efficiency, and sanitation. Ultimately, Goldstein believes, we have fully embraced their ideals, even as their public roles have almost wholly disappeared.

Vintage Wisconsin Gardens: A History of Home Gardening, by Lee Somerville. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011. xx, 178 pp. Illustrations (many in color), appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Jill Nussel is a lecturer in history at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. Her research and writing have focused on using ethnic cookbooks to gain a fuller understanding of ethnic communities.

There are days when I envy presidential historians who research the lives of men who are well documented and well archived. The rest of us who research the everyday lives of everyday people are usually compelled to extract usable histories from unconventional sources and an uneven core of evidence. Lee Somerville discovered that truth while working on her master's thesis in landscape architecture at the University of Wisconsin. The result is her delightful and informative book, *Vintage Wisconsin Gardens: A History of Home Gardening*.

At the beginning of her research, she found that many of the nation's prestigious open spaces and the landscapes of fabulous mansions were, in fact, well documented, but what Somerville wanted to know was how "regular folks" in Wisconsin conceived of and interacted with their outdoor space. As a result, she set about collecting and extracting everything she could on Wisconsin vernacular gardens of the nineteenth century. She defines vernacular as that which emphasizes the intimate relationships between everyday objects and culture—the area that reflects the real occupants of a home (xv).

With armloads of documents from the Wisconsin State Horticultural Society, what Somerville discovered is that Wisconsinites' relationship to their outdoor space evolved over time and location. As white settlers began to move into Wisconsin Territory, they viewed the land as something to tame and exploit; women settlers tended to think about the areas around their homes as an extension of their idea of domestic tranquility. Early outdoor space was usually more utili-